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A Look at George Vukasin's Tenure as Chairman of the Board

Since George Vukasin, Sr., president of Peerless Coffee Company, became Chairman of the Board of the National Coffee Association in 1997, his accomplishments have been wide-ranging. During his two-and-a-half year tenure, the NCA overall membership increased 15% to reach 175 companies at the end of 1999. That success was reflected in the work done on NCA's bylaws which included redefining the Roaster membership category, adding a new U.S. Grower membership category and initiating a Producer Committee.

NCA President, Robert Nelson, said, "Through George Vukasin's leadership, the Association also took aggressive action to significantly strengthen its financial position." This included transferring the NCA headquarters to new offices in New York right by the New York Board of Trade.

The rise in attendance at NCA annual conventions rose as much as 30% and continues to attract more than 400 attendees. This achievement is due to an on-going expansion of educational seminars at the conventions.

The NCA also helped promote the industry and product with consumers through expanded press coverage -increasing from less than 50 articles in 1997 to more than 200 in 1999. Coverage has also become more focused with the business press with "Forbes", "Fortune" and the "Wall Street Journal" highlight the perspective of the NCA when covering the industry. Two web sites have also been created, one in 1998 and another in 1999 -Coffee Science Source (coffeescience.org) and the official NCA site (ncausa.org). Coffee Science Source delivers a balanced view on the vital issue of coffee, caffeine and health with journalist and health care professionals, and the NCA site educates consumers about the industry and the product.

In market research, Mr. Vukasin oversaw an expansion of the Winter Coffee Survey, renamed the National Coffee Drinking Trends, including new sections on the gourmet coffee sector and the occasional coffee consumer. By providing this timely market intelligence, members and other coffee professionals can use this information in deciding how to increase their sales and profits. In the area of scientific research, the NCA became a founding member of the Institute of Coffee Studies at Vanderbilt University, along with major coffee-producing countries in Latin and South America. The institute conducts research into the positive health benefits of coffee consumption with a focus on the treatment of addiction and depression.

Public affairs initiatives helped advance the industry's interest nationally and internationally. The Association successfully lobbied for the removal of FDA inspection fees in the U.S. budget, while overseas, it led the coffee industry in having the international jute industry adopt a new standard for food-quality oils in jute bag manufacturing.

"These accomplishments," said Nelson, "helped invigorate the Association and the industry as we approached the new millennium. And these are just the highlights of what George Vukasin brought to the role as Chairman. He provided the Board with the perspective of both an entrepreneur and that of a mid-sized roaster of specialty coffees, the fastest growing segment of the market. Quite simply, George Vukasin was the indispensable man of the U.S. coffee industry when it needed one."

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